



THE Wife of Beith ;

With a description of her

JOURNEY TO HEAVEN.



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FALKIRK :

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THE WIFE OF BEITH.

In Beith once dwelt a worthy wife,
Of whom brave Chaucer mention makes
She lived a licentious life,
And namely in venereal acts ;
But death did come for all her cracks,
When years were spent and days out-
driven,

Then suddenly she sickness takes,
Deceast forthwith and went to heaven.

But as she went upen the way.
There followed her a certain guide ;
And kindly to her did say,
Where mean you dame for to abide ?
I know you are the Wife of Beith,
And would not then that you go wrong
For I'm your friend, and will not loath
That you go thro' this narrow throng,
'This way is broader, go with me.
And very pleasant is the way ;
I'll bring thee where you would be,
Go with me friend say me not nay.

She looked on him, then did speer,
I pray you sir, what is your name ?
Show me the way how came you here ?
To tell it to me is no shame.

Is that a favour 'bout your neck ?
 And what is that upon your side ?
 Is it a bag or silver sack ?

What are you then where do you bide ?

I was a servant unto Christ,
 And Judas likewise is my name.

I knew you by your colours first,
 Forsooth indeed you are to blame ;
 Your master did you not betray ?
 And hang yourself when ye had done ?
 Where'er you bide I will not stay ;
 Go then you knave let me alone.

Whate'er I be I'll be your guide,
 Because you know not well the way ;
 Will you at once in me confide,
 I'll do all friendship that I may,

What would you me ?
 Where do you dwell,
 I have nought will go with thee ;
 I fear it is some lower cell,
 I pray thee therefore let me be.

This is a stormy night and cold,
 I'll bring you to a warmer inn ;
 Will you go forward and be bold,
 And mend your pace till ye win in.

I fear your inn will be too warm,
 For too much hotness is not best ;
 Such hotness there may do me harm,
 And keep me that I do not rest ;
 I know your way it is to hell,
 For you are not one of the eleven ;

Go haste you then unto your cell,
My way is only unto heaven.

That way is by the gates of hell,
If you intend there for to go,
Go dame I will not you compel,
But I with you will go also.

Then down they went a right steep
hill,
Where smoke and darkness did abound
And pitch and sulphur burned still,
With yells and cries hills did resound,
The fiend himself came to the gate,
And asked him where he had been ;
Do you not know and have forgot,
Seeking this wife could not be seen.
Good dame said he will you be here
I pray you then tell me your name ;
The wife of Beith since that you speer,
But to come in I were to blame,

I will not have you then good dame
For you were mistress of the flyting,
If once within this gate you come,
I will be troubled with your biting.
Cummer go back and let me be,
Here are too many of your rout ;
For women lewd like unto thee,
I cannot turn my foot about.

Sir thief I say I shall bide out,
But gossip thou wast ne'er to me ;
For to come in, I'm not so stout,
And of my biting thou'st be free ;

But Lucifer what's that on thee?
 Hast thou no water in this place?
 Thou look'st so black it seems to me,
 Thou ne'er dost wash thy ugly face,

If we had water here to drink,
 We would not care for washing then,
 Into these flames and filthy stink.
 We burn with fire in the doom:
 Upbraid me then goodwife no more,
 For first when I heard of the name;
 I knew thou had such words in store,
 Would make the devil to think shame.
 Forsooth Sir thief thou art to blame,
 If I had time now to abide;
 Once ye were well but may think shame
 That lost heaven for rebellious pride;
 Who traitor-like fell with the rest,
 Because ye would not be content,
 And now of bliss are dispossess,
 Without all grace for to repent,
 Thou made'st poor Eve long since
 Consent,

To eat of the forbidden tree;
 (Which we her daughters may repent)
 And made us almost like to thee;
 But God be blest who past thee by.
 And did a Saviour provide;
 For Adam's whole posterity,
 All those who do in him confide,
 Adieu false fiend, I may not bide,
 With thee I may no longer stay;

My God in death he' was my Guide,
O'er hell I'll get the victory.

Then up the hill the poor wife went
Opprest with stinking flames and fear,
Weeping right sore with great relent,
For to go else she wist not where ;
a narrow way with thorns and briers,
and full of mires was here before ;
She sighed oft with sobs and tears.
The poor wife's heart was wond'rous
sore ;

Tired and torn she went on still,
Sometimes she sat and sometimes fell,
aye till she came to a high hill.
and then she looked back to hell.
When that she had climb'd up the hill,
Before her was a goodly plain ;
Where she did rest and weep her fill,
Then rose and to her feet again.
Her heart was glad the way was good
Up to the hill she hied with haste,
The flowers were fair where there she
stood,

The field were pleasant to her taste.

'Then she espied Jerusalem,
On Zion's mount where that it stood :
Shining with gold light as the sun,
Her silly soul was then right glad ;
The ports of pearls shining bright,
Were very glorious to behold,
With precious stones gave such a light

The walls were of transparent gold,
 high were the walls the gates were shut
 and long she thought for to be in;
 But then for fear of biding out,
 She knocked hard and made some din.

To knock and cry she did not spare
 Till father Adam did her hear;
 Who is't that raps so rudely there,
 Heaven cannot well be won by weir.
 The wife of Beith since that you spier,
 Hath stood these two hours at the gate.
 Go back quoth he, thou must forbear,
 Here may no sinners entrance get.

Adam, quoth she, I shall be in,
 In spite of all such churls as thee;
 Thou'rt the original of all sin.
 For which thou art not flyting free,
 But for thy soul offences fled.

Adam went back and let her be,
 Looking as if his nose had bléd.

Then mother Eve did at him speer,
 Who was it there that made such din?
 He said, a woman would be here,
 For me I durst not let her in.

I'll go, said she, and ask her will,
 Her company I would have fain;
 But aye she cried and knocked still,
 And in no ways she would refrain.

Daughter, said Eve, you will do well,
 To come again another tiue;
 Heaven is not won by sword or steel,

Nor none that's guilty of a crime.

Mother said she, the fault is thine,
That knocking here so long I stand;
Thy guilt is more than that of mine,
If thou wilt rightly understand,
Thou wast the cause of all our sin,
Wherein we were born and conceived.
Our misery thou did'st begin,
By thee thy husband was deceiv'd.

Eve went back where Noah was,
and told him all how she was blam'd
Of her great sin and first trespass,
Whereof she was so much asham'd.

Then Noah said I will go down,
and will forbid her that she knock;
Go back, he said, ye drunken lown,
Your none of the celestial flock.

Noah she said, now hold thy peace,
Where I drank ale thou didst drink wine
Discover'd was to thy disgrace,
When thou wast full like to a swine,
If I was drunk I learned at the
For thou'rt the father and the first,
That others taught and likewise me,
To drink when as we had no thirst.

Then Noah turned back with speed
and told the patriarch Abra'am then,
How that the carlin made him dread,
And how she all his deeds did ken.

Abra'am then said now get you gone
Let us no more hear of your din;

No lying wife as I suppose,
May enter in these gates within!

Abra'am, she said will you but spare!
I hope you are not flyting free;
You of yourself had such a care,
Deny'd your wife and made a lie;
Go then I pray you let me be
For I repent of all my sin,
Do thou but ope the gates to me,
and let me quietly come in.

Abra'am went back to Jacob then,
and told his grandson how to speed,
How that of her nothing he wan,
and that he thought the carlin mad,
Then down came Jacob thro' the close
and said go backward down to hell;
Jacob quoth she I know your voice,
That gate pertaineth to thyself,
Of thy old trumpheries I can tell,
With two sisters thou led'st thy life!
and the third part of these tribes twelve
Thou got with maids besides thy wife;
and stole thy father's bennison,
Only by fraud thy father frae;
Gave thou not him for venison,
A kid instead of breaken rae?

Jacob himself was tickled so
He went to Lot where he was lying,
and to the gate prayed him to go,
To staunch the carlin of her crying
Lot says fair dame make less ado,

and come again another day.

Old harlot carle and drunkard too,
Thou with thine own two daughters lay
Of thine untimely se d I say,
Proceeded never good but ill.

Poor Lot for shame then stole away,
And left the wife to knock her fill,
Meek Moses then went down at last,
To pacify the carlin then ;
Now dame said he, knock not so fast,
Your knocking will not let you ben.

Good sir, she said, I am aghast,
Whene'er I look you in the face ;
If that your law till now had last,
Then surely I had ne'er got grace :
But Moses, sir, now by your leave,
although in heaven you be possesst,
For all you saw did not believe,
But you in Horeb once transgressed,
Wherefore by all it is confest.
You but got up the land to see,
and in the mount were put to rest,
Yea buried there where you did die.

Moses meekly turned back,
and told his brother Aaron there,
How the old carlin did so crack,
and in no ways did him forbear.

Then Aaron said, I will not swear,
But I'll conjure her as I can ;
and I will make her now forbear,
So that she shall not rap again.

Then Aaron said, you whorish wife,
 Get you gone and rap no more ;
 (With idols you have led your life,)
 Or then you will repent it sore.
 Good Aaron priest I know you well,
 This golden calf you may remember.
 Who made the people plagues to see.
 The is of you recorded ever ;
 your priesthood now is nothing worth,
 Christ is my only priest, and he,
 My lord, who shall not keep me forth,
 So I'll get in in spite of thee.

Up started Sampson at the length,
 Unto the gate apace came he,
 To drive away the wife with strength,
 But all in vain it would not be.

Sampson, quoth she, the world may
 see,

Thou was a judge that proved unjust ;
 Those gracious gifts which God gave
 thee,

Thou lost by thy licentious lust,
 From Delila thy wicked wife,
 Thy secrets chief couldst not refrain,
 She daily sought to take thy life,
 Thou lost thy locks and then was slain,
 Though thou wast strong it was in vain
 Haunted with harlots here and there,
 Then Sampson turned back again,
 And with the wife would mell nae mair,
 Then said king David knock no more,

We are troubled with thy cry,
 David quoth she, how cam'st thou
 here?

Thou might'st bide out as well as I,
 Thy deeds no ways thou canst deny,
 Is not thy sin far worse than mine?

Who with Uriah's wife did lie,
 And caus'd him to be murder'd syne,
 Then Jedith said who's there that
 knocks,

And to our neighbour gives these notes

Madam said she let be your mocks,
 I came not here for cutting throats:
 I am a sinner full of blots,
 Yet through Christ's blood I shall be
 clean.

If you and I be judged by votes,
 The thing you did was worse than mine

Then said the sapient Solomon,
 Thou art a sinner all men say,
 Therefore our Saviour, I suppose,
 Thee heavenly entrance will deny,

Mind quoth she thy latter days,
 What idol gods thou did upset,
 And wast so lewd in Venus' plays,
 Thou didst thy maker quite forget.

Then Jonas said fair dame content
 you,

If you intend to come to grace.
 You must dree penance and repent you
 Ere you come within this place.

Jonas quoth she how stands the case?
 How came you here to be with Christ?
 How dare you look me in the face?
 Considering how you broke your tryst,
 To go God's errand thou withstood him
 And held his council in disdain;
 The raven messenger thou play'd him,
 And brought no message back again;
 With mercy thou wast not content,
 When that the Lord he did them spare
 Although the city did repent,
 It grieved thee thy heart was sair:
 Let me alone and speak no more,
 Go back again into the whale,
 For now my heart is also sore,
 But yet I hope I shall prevail.

Good Jonas said crack on your fill,
 For here I may no longer tarry,
 Yet knock as long as e'er you will,
 And go into a firry farry.

Jonas she says ye do miscarry,
 As I have done in former time,
 You're no Saint Peter nor Saint Mary,
 Thy blot's as black as ever mine,
 So Jonas then he was asham'd,
 Because he was not flyting free,
 Of all his faults she had him blam'd
 He left the wife and let her be.

Saint Thomas then I council thee,
 Go speak unto yon wicked wife,
 She shames us all, and as for me,

Her like I never heard all my life.

Thomas then said, you make such
din,

When you are out, and meikle din
If you were here, I'll lay my life,
No peace the saints would get within ;
It is your trade for to be flyting,
Still in a fever as one raves.

No marvel though you wives be biting,
Your tongues are made of aspen leaves

Thomas quoth she, let be your taunts,
You play the pick-thank I perceive,
Though ye be brother to the saints,
An unbelieving heart you have ;
Thou brought the Lord unto the grave,
But would no more with him remain,
And wast the last of all the lave,
That did believe he rose again,
There might no doctrine do thee good,
Nor miracles make thee confide,
Till thou beheld Christ's wounds and
blood,

And put'st thy hands unto his side ;
Didst thou not daily with him bide,
And see the wonders which he wrought
But blest are they who do confide,
And do believe yet saw him not ;
Thomas, she says, will you speer,
If that my sister Magdalene,
Will come to me if she be here ;
For comfort sure you give me nane.

He was so blythe he turned back,
and thanked God that he was gane,
He had no will to hear her crack,
But told it Mary Magdalene.

When she did hear her sister's mocks,
She went unto the gate with speed :
and asked her who is't that knocks?

'Tis I, the wife of Beith indeed,
She said good mistress you must stand
Till ye be tried by tribulation.

Sister, quoth she, give me your hand,
are we not both of one vocation?

It is not through your occupation,

That you are placed so divine,

My faith is fixed on Christ's passion,

My soul shall be as safe as thine.

Then Mary went away in haste,

The carlin made her so asham'd,

She had no will of such a guest,

To lose her pains and be so blamed.

Now good St. Paul, said Magdalene,

Because you are a learned man,

Go and convince this woman then,

For *I* have done all that I can :

Sure if she were in hell I doubt,

They would not keep her longer there

Cut to the gate would turn her out ;

and send her back to be elsewhere,

Then went the good apostle Paul,

To put the wife in better tune.

Wash off the filth that fyles thy soul,

Then shall heav'n's gates be open soon.
 Remember Paul what thou hast done,
 For the epistles thou didst compile,
 Though now thou sittest up above,
 Thou persecuted Christ awhile.

Woman he said, thou art not right,
 That which I did, I did not know;
 But thou did sin with all thy might,
 Although the preachers did thee show,

Saint Paul, she said, it is not so,
 I did not know as well as ye,
 But I will to my Saviour go,
 Who will his favour show to me;
 You think you are of flyting free,
 Because you were wrapt up above.
 But yet it was Christ's grace to thee,
 and matchlessness of his dear love,

Then, Paul she says let Peter come,
 If he be lying let him rise,
 To him I will confess my sin.
 and let him quickly bring the keys.
 Too long I stand, he'll let me in,
 For why I cannot longer tarry,
 Then shall ye all be quit of din,
 For I must speak with good saint Mary.

The good apostle discontent,
 Right suddenly he turned back,
 For he did very much repent,
 To hear the carlin proudly crack,
 Paul says good brother now arise,
 and make an end of all this din,

And if be so you have the keys,
 Open and let the carlin in;
 The apostle Paul arose at last,
 and to the gate with speed he he hies,
 Carlin quoth he knock not so fast,
 You cumber Mary with your cries.

Peter she said let Christ arise,
 and grant me mercy in my need;
 For why, I ne'er denied him thrice,
 as though thyself hast done indeed.

'Thou carling bold what's that to thee?
 I got remission for my sin;
 It cost many sad tears to me,
 Before I entered here within.
 It will not be thy muckle din,
 Will cause heaven gates opened be,
 Thou must be purified of sin;
 and of all sins must be made free.

Saint Peter then its nought to you
 That you were rid of your fears,
 It was Christ's gracious look I trow
 That made ye wipe those bitter tears,
 The door of mercy is not closed,
 I may get grace as well as ye,
 It is not so as ye supposed
 I will be in, in spite of thee.

But wicked wife it is too late,
 Thou shouldest have mourn'd upon
 earth,
 Repentance now is out of date:
 It should have been before thy death;

Thou mightest then have turned wrath
To mercy then and mercy great,
But now the Lord is very loth,
and all thy crys not worth a jot.

Ah! Peter then what shall I do?
He will not hear me as I hear,
Shall I despair of mercy too!
No, no, I'll trust in mercy dear:
and if I perish here I'll stay,
and never go from heaven bright;
I'll ever hope and always pray,
Tntil I get my Saviour's sight.
I think indeed you now are right,
If you had faith you would win in;
Importune then with all your might,
Faith is the feet wherewith you come.
It is the hands will hold him fast
But weak faith never may presume;
'Twill let you sink and be aghast.
Stongly believe, or your undone.

But good Saint Peter, let me be,
Had you such faith did it abound?
When you did walk upon the sea,
Were ye not likely to be drown'd?
Had not our Saviour helped thee,
Who came and took thee by the hand:
So can my Lord do unto me,
and bring me to the promised land,
Is my faith weak? Yea he is still
The same and ever shall remain;
His mercies last and his good will,

To bring me to his flock again ;
 He will me help and me relieve,
 and will increase my faith also,
 If weakly I can but believe,
 For from this place I'll never go.

But Peter said how can that be ?
 How dar'st thou look him in the face ?
 Such horrid sinners like to thee,
 Can have no courage to have grace ;
 Here none comes in but they that's
 stout,
 and suffer'd have for the good cause ?
 Like unto thee are keep'd cut.

For thou hast broken all Moses' laws.

Peter she said, I do appeal,
 From Moses and from thee also,
 With him and you I'll not prevail,
 But to my Saviour I will go ;
 Indeed of old you were right stout,
 When ysu did cut off Malchus' ear ;
 But after that you went about,
 And a poor maid then did you fear.
 Wherefore Saint Peter do forbear,
 A comforter indeed your not ;
 Let me alone, I do not fear,
 Take home the wissel of your groat ;
 Was it your own or Paul's good sword
 When that your courage was so keen,
 You were right stout upon my word,
 Then you would fain at fishing been ;
 For ere the crowing of the cock,

You did deny your master thrice.
 For all your stoutness turned a block,
 Now flyte no more if ye be wise.

Yet at the last the Lord arose,
 Environed with angels bright.
 And to the wife in haste he goes,
 Desir'd her to pass out of sight,
 (O Lord quoth she, cause me do right
 But not according to my sin,
 Have you not promised day and night,
 When sinners knocks to let them in?

He said thou wrests the scriptures
 wrong.

The night is come thou spent the day
 In whoredom thou hast lived long,
 And do repent thou didst delay;
 Still my commandments thou abus'd
 And vice committed busily,
 Since now my mercy thou refused,
 Go down to hell eternally,

O Lord, my soul doth testify,
 That I have spent my life in vain;
 Ah! make a wandering sheep of me,
 And bring me to thy flock again.

Think'st thou there is no count to
 ; I crave, to have all small and
 Of all these gifts in thee was planted,
 I gave thee beauty 'bove the lave,
 A pregnant wit thou never wanted.
 Master, quoth she it must be granted,
 My sins are great give me contrition;

The forlorn son when he repented.
Obtain'd his father's full remission.

I spar'd my judgment many times,
And sp'ritual pastors did thee send ;
But thou renew'd'st thy former crimes,
Aye more and more me to offend.

My Lord, quoth she, I do amend,
Lamenting for my former vice,
The poor thief at the latter end,
For one word went to paradise.
The thief heard never of my teachings,
My heavenly precepts and my laws,
But thou wast daily at my preachings,
Both heard and saw and yet misknows,
Master quoth she the scriptures shows,
The Jewish woman who play'd the lown
Conform unto the Hebrew laws,
Was brought to thee to be put down ;
But nevertheless thou let'st her go,
And made the Pharisee's afraid.

Indeed, says Christ, it was right so,
And that my bidding was obey'd,
Woman, he said, I may not cast,
The children's bread to dog's like thee,
Although my mercies yet do last,
'There's mercy here but none for thee,

But, loving Lord, may I presume,
Poor worm, that I may speak again,
The dogs for hunger were undone,
And for the crnmb's they were right
fain ;

Grant me one crumb that then doth fall
 From thy blest children's table Lord,
 That I may be refresh'd withal,
 It will me help enough afford.

The gates of mercy now are clos'd,
 And thou canst hardly enter in ;
 It is not so as thou supposed.
 For thou art deadly sick in sin.
 'Tis true indeed my lord most meek,
 My sore and sickness I do feel ;
 Yet thou the lamb dost truly seek,
 Who lay long at Bethseda's pool,
 Of that thee never sought,
 Like to the poor Samaritan ;
 Whom thou into thy fold has brought,
 Even as thou didst the widow of Nain :
 Most gracious God, didst thou not bid
 All that were weary come to thee ?
 Behold I come ! even o'erload
 With sin, have mercy upon me.

The issues of thy soul are great,
 Thou art both leprous and unclean,
 To be with me thou art not fit,
 Go from me then, let me alone.

Let me thy garments once but touch,
 My bloody issue will be whole,
 It will not cost thee very much,
 To save a poor distressed soul.
 Speak thou the word I shall be whole,
 One look of thee shall do me good,
 Save now good lord my silly soul,

Bought with thine own most precious
blood.

Let me alone, none of my blood,
Was ever shed for such as thee,
It was my mercy patience good:
Which from damnation set them free.

It is confest thou hast been just,
Altho' thou had condemned me;
But O! thy mercies still do last,
To save the soul that trust in thee:
Let me not then condemned be.

Most humbly Lord, I thee request,
Of sinners all none, like me,
So much the more thy praise shall last,

Thy praising me is profite,
My saints shall praise me evermore:
In sinners I have no delight,
Such sacrifice I do abhor.

Then she unto the Lord did say,
At footstool of thy grace I'll lie;
Sweet Lord my God say me not nay,
For if I perish here I'll die.

Poor silly wretch then speak no more,
Thy faith poor soul hath saved thee;
Enter thou into my glory,
And rest through all eternity.
How soon our Saviour these words
said,

A long white robe to her was given;
And then the angels did her lead
Forthwith within the gates of heaven;

A laurel crown set on her head.
 Spangled with rubies and with gold ;
 A bright white palm she always had,
 Glorious it was for to behold ;
 Her face did shine like to the sun,
 like threads of gold her hair hung down
 Her eyes like lamps unto the moon :
 Of precious stones rich was her crown,
 Angels and saints did welcome her,
 The heavenly choir did sing rejoice ;
 King David with his harp was there ;
 The silver bells gave a great noise.
 Such music and such melody,
 Was neither ever heard or seen,
 When this poor saint was plac'd so high
 And of her sins made freely clean ;
 But then when thus she was possest,
 And looked back on all her fears,
 And that she was come to her rest,
 Free'd from her sins, and all her tears,
 She from her head did take the crown,
 Giving all praise to Christ on high,
 And at his feet she laid it down,
 For that the Lamb hath made her free,
 Now doth she sing triumphantly,
 And shall rejoice for evermore
 O'er death and hell victoriously,
 With lasting spirits laid in store.

FINIS.

